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THE CONCEPTION OF READING AND THE USE OF READING

STRATEGIES IN FLORIANÓPOLIS MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

por

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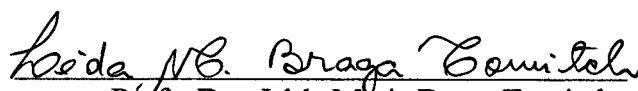
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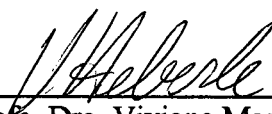


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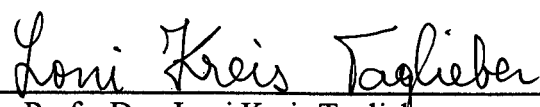
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ABSTRACT**THE CONCEPTION OF READING AND THE USE OF READING
STRATEGIES IN FLORIANÓPOLIS MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS****DÓRIS REGINA MAES****UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA****1999**

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Difficulties in reading comprehension have been a problem in municipal schools of Florianópolis, no matter the language studied, be it Portuguese or English. This research investigated the probable causes of this problem in English classes. Teachers and students from municipal schools of Florianópolis were investigated in relation to their conception of reading in second language and in their use of reading strategies. The data was collected into two different ways: a questionnaire given to the teachers, and a test with cognitive and metacognitive questions applied to two groups of students. One group of students had some instruction in reading strategies and the other underwent traditional teaching. Literature was mainly based on Cohen (1998), for

method; on Coracini (1995), Grigoletto (1995), and Gagné, Yekovich and Yekovich (1993) for the conception of reading; on Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983), Paris, Wasik and Turner (1991), Dole, Duffy, Roehler and Pearson (1991) and Block (1986) for reading strategies; and on Bittencourt (1989), Rosenshine and Meister (1997) for reading strategy instruction. The research involved a total of sixty-four participants, among teachers and students. Results showed that at least, in the case of reading in EFL, the cause of the problem is probably the lack of instruction in reading strategies. The teachers studied were not aware of and probably had no instruction in reading strategies, consequently, they did not give any instruction in this subject to their students. The conceptions of text and reading in a foreign language is that a text is a *group-of-words-that-can-be-studied-separately*, and reading classes serve as a means of teaching and retaining grammar and vocabulary. As a diagnosis, this research will enable the creation of an instructional program on reading strategies training for teachers of municipal schools of Florianópolis.

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RESUMO**THE CONCEPTION OF READING AND THE USE OF READING
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Professora Orientadora: Dra. Lêda Maria Braga Tomich

Dificuldades na compreensão em leitura têm sido um problema nas escolas municipais de Florianópolis, em qualquer que seja a língua estudada - se Português ou Inglês. Esta pesquisa investigou as prováveis causas deste problema nas aulas de língua inglesa. Professores e alunos foram investigados com relação à concepção de leitura em segunda língua e ao uso de estratégias de leitura. Os dados foram coletados em duas etapas diferentes: um questionário aplicado aos professores e um teste com questões cognitivas e metacognitivas aplicado a dois grupos de alunos. Um grupo de alunos havia recebido alguma instrução em estratégias de leitura e o outro não. A literatura utilizada foi baseada principalmente em Cohen (1998) para o método; em Coracini

(1995), Grigoletto (1995) e Gagné, Yekovich e Yekovich (1993) para a concepção de leitura; em Paris, Lipson e Wixson (1983), Paris, Wasik e Turner (1991), Dole, Duffy, Roehler e Pearson (1991) e Block (1986) para estratégias de leitura; e em Bittencourt (1989) e Rosenshine e Meister (1997) para instrução em estratégias de leitura. A pesquisa envolveu um total de sessenta e quatro participantes (entre professores e alunos). Os resultados mostraram que, no caso da língua inglesa, a causa do problema é provavelmente a falta de instrução em estratégias de leitura. Os professores estudados não tinham consciência e nem instrução em estratégias de leitura e, conseqüentemente, não davam instrução nesta área, a seus alunos. As concepções de texto e leitura na segunda língua são as de que um texto é um *grupo-de-palavras-que-podem-ser-estudadas-separadamente*, e as aulas de leitura servem como meio de ensinar e fixar gramática e vocabulário. Como um diagnóstico, esta pesquisa viabiliza a criação de um programa instrucional de treinamento em estratégias de leitura para professores das escolas municipais de Florianópolis.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The present research was developed due to the researcher's crescent awareness of the problems teachers and students of English face in municipal schools of Florianópolis, the anxiety to solve these problems through the improving of teaching, and because of the new world of alternatives the researcher discovered in the Master's Course which could help to find a solution. The fact that many studies were developed with university students, some with secondary students but very few with elementary students, especially in foreign languages, was a decisive element which made me decide to work with municipal schools of Florianópolis. Because of my experience as an English and Portuguese teacher at these schools, I could observe that a great number of students had difficulties in reading comprehension and that a probable reason for those difficulties was the lack of instruction in reading strategies.

1. 1. Historical overview about the situation of English teaching in municipal schools of Florianópolis.

There are twenty-three elementary municipal schools in Florianópolis. All the schools are located in the suburbs, and on the beaches; places such as Lagoa da Conceição, Ingleses, Ribeirão da Ilha, Córrego Grande, Pantanal, Saco Grande, Morro das Pedras and others. Each school has a minimum of ten groups from the 5th to the 8th grades, which is about 250 students and only one teacher of English (per school).

This means that English teachers are on their own to plan, and to teach, with no partnership in their schools. English (or any other language) teaching has received little attention from the government or from the Municipal Educational Department authorities, having been forgotten for many years. Until last year (1998) students in municipal schools started studying English only in the 7th grade, having, then, English for only two school-years¹.

Most of these schools are very poor; teachers and students can not count on textbooks, computers, photocopies, or any other high tech equipment and materials. The economic factor is not a problem only for the schools but for students' families too. Since most of the students' families are very poor, they can not afford a private course of English, books, private teachers, etc. School is the only place where these students can learn a foreign language. These facts make the work of teachers more difficult than it should be. Teachers have not only to be competent in teaching but they also have the mission to choose the most appropriate content, methodology and which skill or skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) to teach their students. In order to do so, teachers have to be well informed and prepared. But this does not happen, universities seem to not handle the job. It is seen that the university only starts a job which has to be developed throughout people's professional lives. A teacher or any other professional always has to study, attend courses, seminars, congresses, etc. Unfortunately, this is not our reality: most of the teachers interviewed in this research stopped studying since they finished their undergraduate courses, read very little about teaching practice, and consequently, are not well informed about new theories and practice in their subject area. The causes of this lack of updating are varied: 1. lack of interest, as many teachers

¹ This (1999) is the year of two important and positive changes in foreign language teaching in *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis*: another foreign language (Spanish) was introduced in its

are not interested in improving their knowledge and practice; 2. lack of time, as many teachers have to work in more than one school, they have many students, which means many classes to prepare, many tests to correct, exercises, etc. having little time for leisure, resting, and studying; 3. lack of money, as teachers from elementary and high schools in Brazil are very badly paid, many times they cannot afford their updating, since seminars, congresses, post-graduate courses, etc. seem not to have been designed to our teachers, if we consider their prices; 4. and lack of opportunities, which many times depends on the point of view of each person, since there are people who can see and find opportunities better than others, but opportunities are especially difficult to be found if we consider all those other causes mentioned above and if we consider that government authorities are not interested in providing alternatives to teachers.

Thinking about surpassing these problems by creating opportunities for teachers from municipal schools of Florianópolis was the reason I started this work.

1. 2. The focus on reading

It is not my intention to discuss which one of the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) is the most important, but no one can deny the importance of reading in building knowledge. Using Gagné, Yekovich and Yekovich's (1993) words:

Reading is a tremendously valuable basic skill. The ability to read opens up the world of jungle animals to an urban six-year-old and the world of sophisticated technology to a ten-year-old villager in Ghana. It allows adults to change careers through independent study. It provides people of all ages with an inexpensive way of finding out about the variety of ideas and social and cultural landscapes that make up our world. (p. 268)

The teaching of reading in a foreign language has many advantages: it is useful, once one learns reading s/he never forgets it; reading can be linked to many subjects and activities giving teachers and students many options; in language classes, teaching reading is not only one end in itself, “it starts to function as a tool for information gathering and for the acquisition of new knowledge” (Bittencourt, 1989:8); it is feasible for groups of all sizes (large, small, and medium groups); it develops cognitive and metacognitive aspects in the students, since it deals with prediction, monitoring, deduction, inference, among others. Every student will have the chance to use his/her ability of reading in English, since this language is seen in handbooks, literature, magazines, newspapers, cards, clothes, advertisements, on TV, and in many other places. Besides this, if students continue studying, the probability of having to develop this skill will be great, due to the necessity of reading books, texts, articles, etc. in English. Nowadays, there are innumerable advantages the teaching of reading can provide to students.

1. 3. The study

This study is the first part of a bigger project of this researcher, which starts studying the reality of the teaching of English in the municipal schools of Florianópolis, especially in relation to reading, and finishes with the creation of a training program in strategies for these teachers. This part of the research investigates teachers’ and students’ conception of reading in English, the objectives of English classes, the skills emphasized (if reading, listening, speaking or writing) in the classes, if students are good or poor readers of English, what strategies have been taught, the methodology and activities used in class, etc. In other words, the objective of the

research is to give a diagnosis of the situation of reading classes in district schools of Florianópolis.

In order to come up with this diagnosis, the research tried to answer the following research questions:

1. Do teachers of English from municipal schools of Florianópolis teach reading strategies to their students? If so, what reading strategies have been taught?
2. Are teachers and students aware of the importance and function of reading strategies?
3. Do all the students tested use reading strategies?
4. Is there any difference in performance between students who receive instruction in reading strategies (if there are any) and students who do not?
5. Are students from municipal schools good or poor readers in English?

1. 4. Significance of the study

The present research extends Bittencourt's study (1989). She showed that students improve performance in reading comprehension when they receive instruction in reading strategies. Ten years later, based on students' bad performance in reading comprehension, a question about the current situation arouses: what have teachers and students been doing in relation to reading a text in English?

The present research differs from previous studies in the sense that its objective is to have a present and real diagnosis of the teaching of reading strategies, so that measures can be taken to improve the teaching of reading.

Therefore, being the study a diagnosis of the real situation of EFL teaching in *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis*, showing the problems and their possible

causes the researcher hopes to contribute to the improvement of the teaching of reading situation faced by municipal schools.

1.5. Organization of the thesis

The present study is organized in five chapters. Chapter one presents a brief historical overview about the teaching of reading in Municipal schools of Florianópolis, discusses the reasons for the development of this study, and describes the study itself. Chapter two reviews some of the literature about the reading process, reading comprehension instruction, and strategic reading. Chapter three provides the methodology used in this study. Chapter four presents the results and discussion about the data collected. And finally, Chapter five presents the conclusion of the thesis showing its limitations and pedagogical implications.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature related to the reading process, reading comprehension instruction, and reading strategies. The literature will be the basis for the researcher to delineate a profile of good and strategic readers, to see the importance of reading strategies' instruction and awareness, and to establish a conception of text and reading.

2.1. The Reading Process

According to Gagné, Yekovich and Yekovich (1993), unfortunately, many people lack the skill of reading despite its importance for people to live decently in society and enjoy their lives. In order to achieve successful reading comprehension, the reader depends on three elements: conceptual understanding, automated basic skills, and strategies. As Gagné et al. observe, conceptual understanding involves prior knowledge, text schemata, vocabulary, and reading materials with topics that the reader already knows about. Conceptual understanding is part of declarative memory. Word decoding skills and the readers' ability to construct propositions from strings of words are examples of automated basic skills. They are part of procedural memory. Strategies are approaches chosen by readers in order to monitor comprehension, depending on their goals. Strategies are also part of procedural memory.

As Gagné et al. put it, skilled reading involves many component processes and can be divided into four subgroups: decoding, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and comprehension monitoring. Decoding or automated basic skills is the activation of meaning in memory from the use of printed words: matching and recoding are part of the decoding process. Literal comprehension is a combination of automated basic skills and conceptual understanding. It is composed of two processes: lexical access and parsing, having the function to obtain literal meaning from printed words. Inferential comprehension, on the other hand, is a combination of automated basic skills, conceptual understanding and strategies. The reader broadens and deepens the idea stated in the text in this step. The processes involved in inferential comprehension are: integration, summarization, and elaboration. Finally, comprehension monitoring helps readers monitor their reading, if they are achieving their goals effectively and efficiently. Monitoring involves goal setting, strategy selection, goal checking, and remedial action(s). All the processes discussed here are important to successful reading comprehension, even “automaticity from lower-level processes is required in order to carry out high-level comprehension processes” (Gagné et al., 1993:311).

In her work, Block (1986) sees reading as a process of construction in which the processor is an active participant. In the same way, Gaskins and Gaskins (1997) say that reading has to make sense. The purpose of reading is the construction of meaning from print. Automaticity in decoding is crucial for fluency. Following the interactive concept of reading, it can be seen that reading is an active process in which meaning is constructed based on readers' experiences (top-down) and the text (bottom-up) rather than meaning being present only in the text. Reading deals with interpretation; the reader interprets what s/he reads in a text according to his/her prior knowledge and the

schemata that have been activated to construct meaning of that specific text. The reader's interpretation is what brings meaning to the text.

Dole, Duffy, Roehler and Pearson (1991) show, in their study, a cognitively based view of reading comprehension. They also emphasize the interactive nature of reading and the constructive nature of comprehension. All readers, no matter if they are novices or experts, "use their existing knowledge and a range of cues from the text and the situational context in which the reading occurs to build, or construct a model of meaning from the text" (Dole et al., 1991:241). This cognitive view of comprehension calls the reader attention to two important characteristics: the knowledge that s/he brings to the task, and the strategies s/he uses to foster and maintain understanding. Prior knowledge comes in many forms: a) specific knowledge about the topic; b) general world knowledge about social relationships and causal structures; and c) knowledge about the organization of the text.

Coracini (1995) discusses the basic modes of information processing: the bottom-up and top-down as well as the interactive hypothesis. She also presents a fourth hypothesis: reading as a discursive process. The bottom-up (Gough, 1972, in Coracini, 1995) hypothesis sees text and its content as the starting point to comprehension. The reader's role, in this case, is to decode, to recognize the known linguistic items and to find the meaning of unknown items. The reader is the recipient. The top-down (Goodman, 1970, in Coracini, 1995) hypothesis sees the reader as the only source of meaning, and the text as something that confirms the readers' hypothesis. The third hypothesis, the interactive (Rumelhart, 1982, in Coracini, 1995) believes that reading is processed by the reader who has socially acquired mental schemata and uses his/her background knowledge to compare to the content of the text, and then constructs meaning. This reader is able to understand the writer's idea and formulate his/her ideas

and intention. There is a fourth conception (Coracini, 1995) which sees reading as a discursive process in which the writer and the reader take part. Both are socially-historically determined and ideologically formed. It is the social-historical moment which determines attitudes, behavior, each one's language, and meaning.

Grigoletto (1995) also works with the concept of text and reading of foreign language students from public elementary and high schools. She investigates whether the reading conditions in a foreign language classroom determine the way the text is approached and comprehended. Through data analysis, Grigoletto noticed a component view of text and reading which goes from fragments to the whole. In this conception, the text is seen as a group of known and unknown words which have to be juxtaposed by the reader in order to obtain its meaning. The idea is that meaning is found after reading the complete text. In order to get this meaning, the reader has to be competent. It could be noticed, in her study, that students tend to base text understanding on known words, which can be cognates or words that they had already learned and assimilated the meaning. They elect a hypothesis for its content from a known or familiar word and base their comprehension on that hypothesis. Students believe that the reader's role is to link one word to the other (and, many times, translate them) in order to get a unique meaning.

As Grigoletto explains, this conception of reading implies the tendency to reduce text into linguistics. This view is corroborated by the fact that the students in her study, do not explore illustration. In the corpus she analyzed, students did not give any importance to illustrations when constructing meaning for the texts. Students used only linguistic resources and did not approach the text with different perspectives. And furthermore, the text was not seen as a revealing document of ideologies, values and

beliefs. Its social, historical and ideological context was not considered but only its linguistic aspect.

All these studies emphasize a cognitive and interactive view of reading comprehension, where the reader is not passive in the process but someone who is active, bringing to the text his/her prior knowledge and strategies.

2. 2. Reading Comprehension Instruction

According to Coracini (1995), in schools, texts are considered to be complete. They are seen as the place where knowledge is. Students only have to discover and assimilate the meaning in the text. In a native and foreign language classroom, the text is frequently used as a pretext. It is used in order to study grammar, vocabulary, fluency, etc. Due to this fact, the text loses its main function which is *to change people's minds* and becomes a place to identify structures and vocabulary. Comprehension is based on some questions, asked by the teacher or given by the schoolbook, about the text's general idea. Many times those questions demand a simple identification of ideas in the text.

In another study, Coracini (1995) investigates the types of reading classes Brazilian students are exposed to. She observed three different 5th-grade groups: one French class, one Portuguese class, and one Brazilian History class. She observed class organization, dialogue organization among teacher and students, and teacher-students interaction in order to construct meaning. She concluded that teachers know very little about reading pedagogy. When they do know something, they have many difficulties in putting it in to practice. Students are not considered as acting subjects, role which is given to the teachers in ordinary classroom situations. Dialogue in the classroom is not

the same as everyday dialogues. While in everyday dialogues the answers for questions are unknown (by the one who has asked), in a classroom situation, questions have the objective of teaching and developing students' ability of thinking. In a classroom, dialogue reveals power relations. Finally, the reading conception, in the three observed classroom situations, is seen as *correct pronunciation, adequate intonation, understanding the meaning of each word and sentence, and seeing the exact place in the text where the answers for questions are*. Questions and answers are many times presented by schoolbooks. Through these results it can be seen that reading classes are not used to exploring meaning and reading comprehension, they have been used to developing lower level processes in reading.

Paris, Wasik and Turner (1991) report many studies which show that students improve their reading comprehension after they receive instruction on reading strategies. The strategies applied to those studies are divided into three different moments: before, during and after reading. Before starting to read a text, the reader can apply strategies such as skimming, examining the title and subheadings, looking at pictures, etc. These strategies help to motivate the reader to read the text, to give a global view of the text, to make predictions about it, as well as to activate prior knowledge. Activating prior knowledge is an important way to improve comprehension. Langer (1981, 1984, in Paris et al., 1991:612) proposes that "the schemata provided by prior knowledge apparently guide readers to make inferences and elaboration while reading. Activating prior knowledge can be stimulated by many instructional procedures, such as group discussion of the key concepts in text".

Strategies are important during reading since they help readers go beyond the information given in the text, monitor the construction of meaning, and solve problems in understanding. Some examples of reading strategies are: identifying main ideas,

making inferences and elaboration from the background knowledge, making notes, and text inspection.

Reviewing and reflecting after reading are important strategies for the reader to see to what extent s/he has achieved his/her goals, if s/he has learned from the text, if s/he can summarize or answer questions about what has been read. After reading a text, the reader can try to answer some questions such as “What did I learn?”, “Did I meet my goal?”, “Can I summarize the main points?”, etc. (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991:614).

According to Paris et al. (1991), the development of strategic reading is fostered by cognitive development, practice and instruction. The selection and application of strategies that are appropriate to the tasks depend on personal motivation. There are many new methods of instruction which emphasize cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and affective dimensions of reading. Methods such as modeling, direct explanation, cognitive coaching, peer tutoring, and cooperative learning are used to stimulate children’s knowledge about reading and their motivation to regulate their own learning. As students monitor their own reading, and use strategies for different purposes, they become independent learners who read with confidence and enjoyment.

For Dole et al. (1991:242), “the goal of instruction would be to develop a sense of conscious control or metacognitive awareness over a set of strategies that readers can adapt to any text”. Following three criteria: 1. cognitive view of the reading process, 2. difference between skilled and less-skilled readers, and 3. instructional amenability, they identified five main strategies to be taught: 1) Determining importance - the ability to separate important from unimportant information helps to achieve effective comprehension. Students can accomplish this task through instruction; 2) Summarizing information - in order to summarize information readers have to examine carefully large

units of text, they have to differentiate important from unimportant information, and synthesize those ideas creating a coherent text that represents the original; 3) Drawing inferences - inference is the most important part of the comprehension process. Every text requires inferencing; 4) Generating questions - This practice is rarely used even though it leads to deeper levels of text processing. It improves reading comprehension, although the nature and intensity of the instruction are important things to be considered; 5) Monitoring comprehension - Good readers are better than poor readers in monitoring, controlling and adapting strategies while they read. Comprehension monitoring is a two-part process: being aware of the quality and the degree of one's understanding (monitoring) and knowing what to do and how to do it when the reader becomes aware of comprehension failures (fix-it strategies).

In this cognitive view of instruction the teacher helps students to construct their own learning. Teachers and students negotiate instructional meaning. There are four instructional actions in this negotiation: "1. planning the understanding to be developed, 2. selecting academic work that will develop those understandings, 3. providing explicit information to help students interpret academic work accurately, and 4. providing gradually diminished assistance as students move closer and closer to independent use of the intended curricular outcomes" (Dole et al., 1991:255).

The study developed by Rosenshine and Meister (1997) shows instructional procedures to help teach cognitive strategies to students. The work is based on 50 studies, which have been developed since 1980, in which cognitive strategies were taught to students in order to improve their reading comprehension. The authors begin showing the difference between well-structured tasks and less-structured tasks. The former can have a fixed sequence of steps that lead to the same objective. Algorithms are followed in order to achieve success. The latter is considered high-level tasks. Less-

structured tasks do not have algorithms to be followed, they do not even lead to the goal. Reading comprehension is a good example of these tasks.

In those studies about comprehension instruction mentioned above by Rosenshine and Meister, (Durkin, 1979; Duffy, Lanier, & Roehler, 1980) it was observed that teachers spent most of their instructional time asking students questions, assigning activities, etc. but very little time was spent by those teachers presenting a strategy, providing assistance, showing them how to complete the tasks, etc. Because of those findings, investigators developed procedures which consisted of teaching students specific cognitive strategies that they could use to help perform high-level tasks in reading. According to the authors, cognitive strategies have been taught by providing students with support to bridge the gap between their current abilities and the intended goal - scaffolds. The scaffolds and instructional procedures grouped by Rosenshine and Meister in this work have the objective of improving students' reading comprehension. They are classified in seven major groups: 1. Develop and present a procedural prompt; 2. Demonstrate the use of the prompt through modeling and thinking aloud; 3. Guide students through initial practice using techniques that reduce the difficulty of the task; 4. Provide for student practice; 5. Provide for feedback and self checking; 6. Increase the students' responsibility as they master the strategy; 7. Provide independent practice with new examples.

They conclude that instead of a dichotomy, there is a continuum from well-structured explicit skills to cognitive strategies. At all points of this process some instructional elements, such as presenting information in detailed steps and providing guided practice, are very important. There is an increased instructional value in providing students with scaffolds during presentation and guided practice phases as one moves from well-structured tasks to cognitive strategies.

Gaskins and Gaskins (1997), reporting on the Benchmark Instructional Program, believe that a successful reading program provides students with three components for effective learning and for fostering independent readers. They are: knowledge, strategies and motivation. Following this belief, their instructional program was designed to develop these three components in students and make them self regulated readers and learners.

The theory of learning, which is the basis for their work, is derived from cognitive science. Learning is seen as a socially mediated process which requires active construction, motivation and confidence to take risks. It is also a product of time and effort, and it is purposeful. In order to foster good, independent readers, Benchmark teachers believe that *awareness* of the factors affecting the construction of meaning, *control* of the factors that affect the construction of meaning by employing strategies, assessing progress toward their reading goal, and *love* of reading, which makes the students look for opportunities to read, are characteristics which have to be developed.

The Benchmark School has principles of instruction such as the focus on the desired outcomes of instruction; the creation of a safe environment for risk taking; a dynamic and flexible planning; teaching actively and across the curriculum; and encouraging extensive reading and sharing. There is also a staff program of instruction, which includes classes, seminars, meetings, etc.

Kameenui et al. (1997) based their instruction program on Direct Instruction. In recent years, researchers have identified critical principles of quality instruction. These principles transcend specific programs, theory, and practice, and they affect students' achievement. They serve to expand one's thinking beyond the best way to teach a more comprehensive focus. These principles are the following: 1) Big ideas - concepts or principles within a content area that have the greatest potential for enabling students to

apply what they learn in varied situations; 2) Integration - integrating reading and writing appears to engage learners in a greater variety of reasoning operations than when reading or writing is taught separately, or when students perform a variety of other tasks in conjunction with their reading, thus addressing the efficacy criterion; 3) Strategy - a strategy is defined as an organized set of actions designed to accomplish a task or activity. Once learned, the component rules and processes can be applied to novel instances. Such instructional routines minimize instructional time and optimize opportunities for independent learning; 4) Scaffolds - the purpose of scaffolding is to provide the learner with support during the developmental phases of learning. Once structures are firm and the learner can apply strategies and big ideas independently, these external supports are gradually removed; 5) Review - effective review is cumulative, varied and distributed over time.

Bittencourt (1989) prepared a program of instruction to students from *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis*. Her main objective was to show that students who receive instruction on reading strategies are more successful in reading comprehension than students who do not. In her program, she emphasized vocabulary items, text comprehension, text organization, English language structure and grammar. The research was developed with two groups, one which engaged with the program of instruction and the other which did not. Students' performance was tested in three moments: before, during and after receiving instruction. The results showed that the emphasis on teaching reading strategies was positive. Seventy percent of the students in the sample tests reached the objectives of the study. Better effects of instruction were noticed in pre-reading activities, use of cognates, skimming and scanning. Bittencourt's work was my basis in order to choose strategies to be studied. Having participated as a teacher in two schools in that project, I could corroborate the efficiency of reading

comprehension instruction, in spite of the impossibility to work with a specific program using specific and special material (as it was done in Bittencourt's work) since the *Rede Municipal* cannot afford such a material.

Carvalho (1984) has done a similar work with twenty students from the Federal University of Piauí. They completed two tests: a summary test and a reading strategy test. Five students were chosen to attend a course about reading strategies. Through this research, the author concluded that most students did not know how to make a summary, that the teaching of English is mostly based on translation, and that the teaching of reading strategies was effective since the poor readers showed a very good performance in reading comprehension and in the use of reading strategies after attending the course.

As it could be seen, the instructional programs such as the ones referred to above, have the development of reading strategies as crucial for the success of reading comprehension and learning. Strategies are fostered by cognitive development, practice and instruction.

2. 3. Strategic Reading

According to Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983) the use of strategies is very important to reading comprehension. In order to become a strategic reader, cognitive development and social contexts of learners have to be considered, and strategies can be taught directly. To be a good reader, one must learn how, when, and where to integrate new and old information. Part of becoming a proficient reader includes the acquisition of knowledge relevant to the task. Declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge provide a convenient taxonomy of information necessary for strategic performance:

Declarative knowledge is knowing *that*, in other words, it is the readers' beliefs and propositions about a task's structures, goals and personal abilities. It includes the kind of information that can help in setting goals and adjusting actions to change task conditions. *Procedural* knowledge is knowing *how*. It refers to the procedures the reader has to take in order to achieve his/her goals (e.g. how to summarize, how to skim, etc.). *Conditional* knowledge is knowing *when* and *why* to apply various actions. It describes the circumstances, time, and also the reason why a specific strategy has to be applied. With these three types of knowledge, the reader can choose useful actions depending on specific goals. The reader can adapt and adjust actions if conditions change and can also manage available resources.

In addition, motivation is another important aspect of strategic reading. Personal significance, utility, efficiency, and self management are features that have to be considered. It is important for the learner to feel significance in his/her goals. The learner has to have clear in mind the end state and how the actions contribute to it. S/he must accept the goal as if it was his/hers. The reader also has to understand the utility and efficiency of the strategy s/he is using. S/he has to judge the actions significant and useful. Finally, s/he has to have self management of resources, which implies management of time and effort the reader can devote to the task, the balance between the cost of the strategy applied and the benefit of the goal.

In summary, development and instruction are crucial for strategic reading. Declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge, as well as motivation, are the necessary ingredients for the reader to complete the tasks and achieve the goals.

In their study, Paris et al. (1991) emphasize that children can be trained to use strategies. Many other studies show that age influences the acquisition of strategies (Brown et al., 1983; Hare & Borchardt, 1984; and others, in Paris et al., 1991). The

number and complexity of the strategies used increase with children's age. Beginners need assistance to use strategies while teenagers can use them with ease.

Concerning the differences between skills and strategies, Paris et al. say that "skills refer to information processing techniques that are automatic" (1991:610). No matter the level of the process, skills are applied to texts unconsciously. In this case, the reader is not aware of the techniques s/he uses while reading. On the other hand, strategies are those skills applied deliberately. They are "actions selected deliberately to achieve particular goals" (1991:611). Therefore, skills can become strategies when they are used intentionally by the reader and vice-versa: strategies, when used automatically, can become skills. Since strategies are conscious, they can be managed by the reader. The reader can choose the appropriate strategy that fits his/her reading goals, occasion, and the specific text s/he is reading; the reader can also evaluate whether the strategy is working or not, change it, if necessary, and so on.

In this way, Dole et al. (1991) identified four basic differences between strategies and skills: 1) concerning intention: strategies are intentional and deliberate while skills are automatic and follow a certain routine; 2) cognitive sophistication: strategies involve reasoning and critical thinking while skills work with lower-levels of thinking and learning; 3) flexibility and adaptability: strategies can be changed and adapted according to the needs, while skills cannot; and 4) awareness: the use of strategies implies metacognitive awareness; whether the reader understands what s/he is reading or not. Awareness leads to regulation and repair, while skills give no place for intention or consciousness.

The study developed by Block (1986) investigates the comprehension strategies used by college-level students (native and non-native speakers of English) enrolled in remedial reading classes. The method used in her study in order to examine the

strategies was think-aloud protocols. It was noticed that poor readers, who did not use reading comprehension strategies, had a worse degree of automation than good readers. These (good) readers are more aware of how they solve the problems they face while reading. Strategy use is related to measures of memory and comprehension and to academic performance. It was noticed in the study that language background did not influence the use of strategies or patterns of strategies, suggesting “that strategy use is a stable phenomenon which is not tied to specific language features” (1986: 485). The possible difference between learning to read in the first language and in a second language is that when people learn to read in their first language, they must learn both how to read language in print and the appropriate strategies to use for comprehension. But when people learn to read in a second language, they need only to understand the target language features in print. In the same way, the findings of Benedetto (1984), Cummins (1980), Hudson (1982), and Lambert and Tucker (1972) (in Block, 1986) indicate that there is a kind of transference from aspects of reading ability of one language to another.

According to the results of Block’s study, there is a connection between strategy use and the ability to learn. Those nonproficient readers were divided into two groups according to their patterns of strategy use: the integrators were subjects who responded only in the extensive mode², integrated information, were aware of text structure with some frequency, could monitor their reading with consistency and effectiveness, and looked for clues when they did not understand what they read. The non-integrators used more of their personal experiences in order to develop a version of the text, their

² Block included in her coding scheme mode of response (extensive and reflexive modes), as a descriptive dimension, because of the differences between readers’ responses. One was more objective than the other, while dealing with the material presented. In the extensive mode, readers do not relate the ideas in the text with themselves, but with the author. They focus their understanding on the author’s ideas. On the other

responses were more often in the reflexive mode, they did not try to connect information as much as the integrators, they were less successful in developing their reading skills in college than the integrators.

The responses of several participants in Block's study suggested that think-aloud is an important learning tool. The task of thinking-aloud made readers more aware of what they understood and what they did not. Through awareness of what they were doing and understanding, the participants could teach themselves.

Block also gives a good profile of the strategic reader. She says that good readers are more able to monitor their comprehension, that they are more aware of the strategies they use, and that they use strategies more flexibly, while poor readers do the opposite. Good readers easily choose and use strategies according to the text they are reading, and also according to their goals.

Romainville (1994) investigated the way university students describe, judge and justify their cognitive strategies. He explored, in particular, the relationship between students' metacognition and their academic performance. In a sample of 35 students, a relationship was found between performance and some students' metacognitive knowledge characteristics. He noticed that high achieving students were those who were aware of cognitive strategies and of the factors that influence them. Their metacognitive knowledge also seemed more structured and hierarchically organized.

Jones et al. (1987) noticed that good readers are able to abandon some strategies if they notice that those strategies are not working. In this case, they choose other strategies that fit better to their purposes. Strategic readers are more able to distinguish between important information, main ideas, and details than poor readers. Strategic

hand, in the reflexive mode, readers react more affective and personally to the text, they focus understanding on their own thoughts and feelings.

readers have the ability to notice inconsistencies in the text and easily solve the problem by employing strategies which help them to understand it better. They use clues to anticipate information and make relations between new information already stated in the text.

In Baretta (1998), the processing of texts by eight proficient readers of English when reading to recall and to summarize was investigated. Those readers had to read the texts, say what happened during reading, recall and summarize one of the texts. She adapted the pause protocol technique from Cavalcanti (1987) and Tomitch (1995) and followed the codification system developed by Block (1986). Results showed that strategies were more used when reading to recall than when reading to summarize. This fact indicates that there is a relationship between the texts and their comprehension measures. The study also showed that the kinds of texts and objectives influence the way readers approach texts.

It was through these studies that I, as a researcher, could construct the profile of a strategic reader in order to compare them to the students investigated in my research. First, it is important to know if the students have been instructed on reading comprehension strategies (according to Paris et al. 1991; Kameenui, 1997; Gaskins & Gaskins, 1997; Rosenshine & Meister, 1997; Bittencourt, 1987; and many others), if they are poor or good readers, skilled or strategic readers (Block, 1986; Paris et al., 1983; Dole et al., 1991; Romainville, 1994; Jones, et al., 1987; etc.), if they are aware of those strategies, if they have knowledge about their function, if they know how to use them, if they can monitor their reading, if they have self management of resources, in other words, if they use their declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge, as it was discussed in Paris et al. (1983), in order to complete the tasks and achieve the objectives.

Also, students and teachers' conception of text and reading will be verified according to the works by Grigoletto (1995), Coracini (1995), Gagné et al. (1993), Block (1986) and others.

In all the studies mentioned above, many words were exhaustively repeated due to the fact that they are the key for the understanding of reading strategies. Words such as awareness, flexibility, adaptability, knowledge, reasoning, intention, cognitive and metacognitive development, motivation, instruction, control, self management, confidence and many others were the spirit for my investigation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

3. 1. Subjects

There were twenty teachers of English at *Rede Municipal de Ensino Florianópolis* at the time this study was carried out. Nineteen of them plus forty-six students participated in the study. The teachers responded to a questionnaire and the students were submitted to a test. All 19 teachers had a university degree in both Portuguese and English and taught English at the twenty-three district elementary schools in Florianópolis. From these teachers, only six were permanent members of the *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis* and fourteen were substitute teachers. Most of them also taught Portuguese. Only two of the nineteen teachers had one of their groups tested.

Both groups of students were chosen following four criteria which were set to try to guarantee a minimum of vocabulary knowledge, and a minimum of a year of instruction in English. The criteria were: 1- the students had to be in the 8th grade, since they start studying English only in the 7th grade; 2- they should have had English classes with the same teacher in the year before (7th grade); 3- the objectives and methodology followed by each of the teachers had to be the same during those two years of instruction (7th and 8th grades); 4- one of the groups should have had instruction on reading, preferably on reading strategies, and the other group should

have undergone traditional teaching. Besides the criteria mentioned above, the groups were chosen taking into account students' availability of time and cooperation, associated with discipline and also with their teachers' availability. The students' age ranged from fourteen to seventeen years old. Eighth grade is the last year of elementary school in Brazil and, concerning the study of foreign languages, this grade is only the second year it is offered by *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis*. The two groups of students chosen to take part in this study came from two different schools and had different teachers.

GROUP A:

Group A was composed of twenty-eight students (16 boys and 12 girls) from *Escola Básica Municipal Gentil Mathias da Silva*, in Ingleses. According to their teacher, they had some instruction in reading strategies and this was the main objective of her classes. They did not use a specific English book although their teacher based her teaching on "Password - Read and Learn" (Marques, Tavares & Preston, 1998). This book followed the structural approach and the reading classes explored vocabulary and grammar. In spite of this, through the questionnaire, it was noticed that the teacher explored the observation of pictures, cognates, false-cognates, dates, nouns, title, prediction, context, and inference.

GROUP B:

Group B had eighteen students (7 boys and 11 girls) from *Escola Básica Municipal Beatriz de Souza Brito*, in Pantanal. The teacher did not emphasize reading in her classes. Her main objectives were the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, and the ability emphasized was writing. Therefore, texts were used only to identify and retain vocabulary and syntax. She assumed that reading was a means to teach the

language and not the final objective of her classes. As noted in the answers to the questionnaire, the instructions the teacher gives to her students in order to comprehend the text are the use of dictionary and translation. Students did not have a book to follow but the teacher used “New Dynamic English” (Bertolin & Siqueira) as a basis for her class.

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Instruments

Data collection was made through adaptations of some important methods for the investigation of language strategies use, discussed in Cohen’s work (1998) and used by many researchers (such as Block, 1986; Cavalcanti, 1987; Bittencourt, 1989; and Kern, 1994). A twenty-question questionnaire (addressed to teachers) organized by the researcher, with the advisor’s help, and a test with cognitive and metacognitive questions (addressed to students) were the main forms of data collection.

3.2.1.1. Teachers’ Questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on Cohen’s work (1998). It was used because of the large number of participants it is able to reach. The questionnaire had semi-structured questions, which requested some information but did not predetermine the shape of responses, giving the teachers freedom to answer whatever they wished (see Appendix 1). It explored in detail the way, methodology, objectives, abilities, and strategies

teachers used in their reading comprehension classes. Its main objectives were: to investigate whether the teacher emphasized reading ability or not, whether s/he taught reading strategies, and what reading strategies s/he taught (if s/he did so). The questionnaire was given to all the twenty English teachers from elementary schools of *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis*, but only nineteen answered it.

3.2.1.2. *Students' Test*

The second part of data was obtained through an adaptation of a test with a questionnaire, which induced self reporting and self observation (see Appendix 2). All this adaptation was made in a way that the respondents answered in written form instead of orally, due to the large number of respondents (46) from the two groups of students. The test was addressed to the students from the two groups (A and B) mentioned before. As the questionnaire given to the teachers, this test was also based on Cohen's work (1998:30). He observed that strategy descriptions are more accurate when the questions attempt to have respondents think of specific learning events, not generalized behavior patterns.

The test had the objective to make the students' profile in relation to strategic reading, that is, to see whether or not they used the strategies taught by their teachers, whether there were differences in the use of strategies and differences in reading comprehension between students who had instruction on reading strategies in relation to those who underwent a more traditional teaching of reading. The tests were prepared in a way that, through the answers, it could be seen the students' conception of reading, if the students were aware of reading strategies: if they knew how to use strategies, if they

really used strategies, if they knew what strategies they used, and the strategies' function. It was not expected that the students tested had a great amount of knowledge in English nor in reading strategies since they were beginners in these subjects. Because of this the researcher chose strategies that she understood as basic ones for a beginner to have a minimum of text comprehension. Then, there were questions about pre-reading activities (such as activation of previous knowledge and exploring, title and illustration) which had the objective to activate students' prior knowledge to help them to understand the text during reading strategies such as skimming, which helps students to recognize the text main idea; exploring text structure, which helps students to find out parts of the text (introduction, development and conclusion); strategies which explore vocabulary, such as keywords, cognates, false-cognates, word deduction, and use of dictionary, which help students to grasp the gist of the text and also to find out the main ideas in the text; scanning which helps students to find out specific ideas in the text; and inference, the strategy which functions as the bridge between what was read in the text and students' own knowledge and conclusions (Bittencourt, 1989). These strategies were chosen due to the fact that they were most frequently cited in the literature, and because they are more appropriate to beginners. Right after answering the questions, the students mentioned and commented about the strategies they used.

The questions of the test were based on works about reading strategies instruction (Bittencourt, 1989; Dias, 1990; Dias, 1996; Ediger et al., 1989; Evaristo et al., 1996).

The test included two texts in English:

The first text - ANIMAL ALLERGY (Evaristo et al., 1996) (see Appendix 3) was selected following these criteria: 1. Vocabulary had to be in accordance to the students' English level. This was ensured by the teachers of the two groups who saw the texts

and tests in advance and approved them; 2. The text had to contain a large number of cognates; 3. It could not be too long, since students were beginners; 4. it had to be organized in terms of problem-solution, since this pattern of organization is widely used in both L1 and L2 classes and it is an easy structure to be identified (Winter & Hoey, 1986, in Evaristo et al., 1996); 5. The topic had to be interesting and, in some way, familiar to the students. The text was not presented in its original format. Its lines were numbered in order to facilitate students' answers. This first text - ANIMAL ALLERGY (Evaristo et al., 1996) - explored 14 questions (see Appendix 2) including pre-reading activities, use of background knowledge, general idea, skimming, scanning, text organization, cognates, false cognates, keywords, use of dictionary, awareness, metacognition, and inferencing. Each question was divided into two or more items: one, with cognitive questions about the text itself, and one about metacognition. Metacognitive questions are those prompts which ask students to report about the strategies they used to complete the tasks, how they found the answer, and so on.

The second text - an advertisement about the chips PRINGLES (Readers' Digest, 1998) (see Appendix 4) followed the same criteria as the first text with addition of: 1. having meaningful illustrations; 2. Being an advertisement, and because of this, having a different organization from the first text. This text was followed by five questions (see Appendix 2) which explored the illustrations, the use of context in word-meaning deduction, main idea, and general idea. The questions about this text followed the same characteristics of the questions in the first text. They also had cognitive and metacognitive items.

3.2.2. *Procedures*

3.2.2.1. *Teachers' Questionnaire*

In order to have the questionnaires answered, the researcher asked for an appointment with all the teachers individually. The meetings took place in the schools the teachers worked at, except for three of them which took place in the teachers' own homes. The meetings lasted from one to two hours. Three other teachers did not have time to talk to the researcher so, because of this, the researcher gave them the questionnaires to be answered whenever they could, and later, they brought it back to the researcher. During the appointment, the researcher introduced herself, gave a brief explanation about the research (see Appendix 1), asked and explained the questions in the questionnaire orally, one by one. As the teachers answered each of the questions, the researcher asked them to explain better the points which she judged to be more important or those which were not well explained. Some teachers showed the books they used and based their classes on; some teachers just mentioned them; and some of them also showed their class planning.

After all the questionnaires had been completed, the researcher analyzed the answers given, in order to compose the two groups (one which had had more instruction in reading strategies and another which did not) which participated in the test and to prepare the second part of the data collection which consisted of the tests already described.

3.2.2.2. *Students' Test*

The tests were given to the students on two different dates appointed by their teachers. They had two classes of 45 minutes each (a total of 90 minutes) to complete the test, in a usual school day. Group B, the one which was not used to working with reading strategies was the first to be tested (November 27, 1998 - from 10:00 to 11:30 in the morning). Group A, which, according to their teacher, had had instruction about reading strategies, completed the test on December 1st, 1998 - from 1:10 to 2:40 in the afternoon. Both groups did the test on their last school day.

The students knew that they were being tested and they were not obliged to participate in it. The tests did not affect students in terms of grades, success or failure since none of them needed grades to pass the school year.

The researcher introduced herself to the students and gave a brief explanation of her research. She told them that she wanted to see whether and how well they could understand a text in English. The general instructions for the test were given orally and written on the blackboard (see Appendix 5) and the instructions for the questions were given in the tests. The test was divided into three parts. In the first one, the students could see the text briefly (the strategy tested was prediction). To answer the second question, they could not see or read the text (the strategy tested was activation of previous knowledge, and prediction). To guarantee that the students did not use the text to answer the second question and that they had the text to answer the first one, the researcher showed the text using an overhead projector and as they completed the first task, the researcher turned it off. For the remaining questions, the students could use the texts, which were given to them after answering the second question.

They could use the dictionary, except to answer the first question of the second text. To answer this question, the students had to deduce the meaning of some words instead of looking them up in the dictionary, but unfortunately, the researcher could not control many students and they looked for the answers in the dictionary. Therefore, the answers to this specific question were disregarded.

Dictionaries were put on some desks in the classroom and the students could use them if they needed or wanted to. The teacher and the researcher stayed in the classroom and clarified only doubts students had about the actual phrasing of the questions.

The test was judged appropriate for the groups by the researcher's advisor, two students from the Graduate Program in English, and three teachers from *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis*. Two of those three teachers were the teachers of the groups being tested. Since the target groups' teachers judged the texts and tests appropriate for their students, and with the positive opinions from the other judges, the researcher applied the tests to the two target groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses and discusses the data collected. In order to organize the discussion, the results are presented as the research questions are answered. The data came from the answers to the teachers' questionnaire, and from the students' tests. The research questions are the following: 1. Do teachers of English from district schools of Florianópolis teach reading strategies to their students? If so, what reading strategies are taught?; 2. Are teachers and students aware of the importance and function of reading strategies?; 3. Do all the students tested use reading strategies?; 4. Is there any difference in performance between students who receive instruction in reading strategies and students who do not?; 5. Are students from district schools of Florianópolis good or poor readers in English?

4.1. 1) Do teachers of English from municipal schools of Florianópolis teach reading strategies to their students? If so, what reading strategies have been taught?

Before analyzing the data, it is important to remember that there were 20 teachers of English in the 23 municipal schools of Florianópolis during the time the research was carried out (1998). Three teachers worked in two schools simultaneously and only one teacher did not participate in the questionnaire. This means that 19 teachers participated in the research, representing 22 schools. In order to give percentage for the research, the

researcher considered the number of teachers interviewed instead of the number of schools, except in question 1, which the number of schools was considered.

The first question in the teachers' questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was about whether teachers and students used some specific book in their classes and what books they used. The answers are in Table 1 below:

Number of schools	Only teachers used textbooks	Both teachers and students used textbooks
22	12 - 72,73%	6 - 27,27%

Table 1 - Use of textbooks

The main reason mentioned by the teachers for the low rate of textbooks used by teachers and students was the students' families low income plus the fact that the government did not distribute English books to district schools. In other words, students could not afford to buy all books needed at school and teachers could not force them to buy the books. The few schools which work with textbooks use them because there was a considerable number of books in those schools already. The books were: 4 "Password" (Marques, Tavares & Preston, 1998¹); 1 "Our Way" (Amos, 1998); 1 "Time for English" (Marques, 1989). Because of this, only teachers (72,73%) used books to base their teaching on. Some of those books were old ones and followed the structural approach: 4 "Password" (Marques, Tavares, & Preston, 1998); 3 "English Plus" (Arruda²); 1 "New" (Bertolin & Siqueira), 1 "English" (Marques³); 1 "Our Way" (Amos, 1998); 1 "Easy Way to English" (Zahar, 1993); 1 "Steps" (Keller); 1 "Spotline"

¹ This book and others such as "Our Way", "Easy Way to English", "Time for English", and "Spot line" are in the tenth, or third editions, but the dates are from the editions teachers have.

² This book and others such as "New Dynamic English", "New" and "Blow up" do not have the dates printed in them.

(Azevedo & Gomes, 1992) and 1 “Blow Up 5” (Azevedo & Gomes); 1 Colégio Barddal’s mimeographed textbook; 2 New Dynamic English (Bertolin & Siqueira); and English Point (Aun, Moraes & Sansanovicz, 1997). None of the books cited by the teachers gave emphasis to reading and none of them featured reading comprehension strategies. Most of them emphasized speaking, vocabulary and grammar.

For the second question in the teachers’ questionnaire, which was about the skill teachers worked more and gave more emphasis to their classes (if it was reading, listening, writing, or speaking) the answers varied as it can be seen in Table 2 below:

Emphasis	Number of teachers	Percentage
writing	4	21,05%
writing + listening	3	15,78%
reading + writing	3	15,78%
four skills	1	5,26%
reading	3	15,78%
reading + listening + speaking	1	5,26%
speaking	1	5,26%
grammar ⁴	2	10,52%
no skill specified	1	5,26%

Table 2 - Focus on language skills

Many teachers cited grammar and/or vocabulary and/or translation plus one or two skills they emphasized, showing the importance they give to these items (grammar, vocabulary, translation). Not even the fact that many teachers (42,08%) cited reading as the (or one of the) focus of their classes, showed a good result, since the focus on their reading classes was not reading comprehension but, as it was already mentioned, vocabulary and grammar.

³ Some books such as this one and “English Point” do not have the dates in the research since teachers only cited them (they did not bring the books for the interview). Afterwards, the researcher looked for those books in book shops but did not find them.

⁴ Although grammar is not a language skill, some teachers had it as the only objective and focus of their classes.

When asked about the methodology used and about the activities they worked on in their classes (the fourth question), the answers were:

Methodology and activities	Number of teachers	Percentage
grammar through text	9	47,36%
grammar	11	57,89%
vocabulary	3	15,78%
oral production and comprehension	4	21,05%
culture	3	15,78%
awareness of the importance of learning English	2	10,52%
text interpretation	3	15,79%
translation	2	10,52%

Table 3 - Methodology

Table 2 shows that from the nineteen teachers, only 8 (42,1%) worked with reading and three (15,79%) said that they worked with text interpretation. Most of them worked with reading as a means of teaching grammar, vocabulary, translation, and/or oral production, corroborating the results discussed above.

The frequency of teaching reading can be another way of measuring the teaching of reading in classes. The third question: "How often do you have reading practice in your classes (once or twice a week, twice a month, and how many minutes a class)?" and "How much of your class is dedicated to reading?" was answered as shown in table 4 below:

Frequency and amount of time	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
33,33% - twice a week	2	10,52%
70,0% - twice a week	1	5,26%
33,33% - once a week	5	26,31%
33,33% - twice a month	7	36,84%
no frequency given	4	21,05%

Table 4 - Frequency and amount of time in class dedicated to reading.

From the results above, it is clear that the frequency of reading classes was not bad, in fact it was good. Most teachers had the habit of giving reading classes, although, as it was mentioned before, the objective of their reading classes was not text comprehension.

Two questions in the questionnaire dealt directly with reading strategies: Question 5. "When you work with reading, do you teach reading comprehension strategies to your students?". See Table 5 below:

Answers	Number of teachers	Percentage
Yes	11	57,89%
No	8	42,19%

Table 5 - Reading strategies instruction.

And 6. "What reading strategies do you teach?". See Table 6 below:

Strategies mentioned	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
exploring pictures	7	36,84%
pre-reading activities	6	31,57%
exploring the title	3	15,78%
exercises, questions	4	21,05%
exploring cognates and false-cognates	3	15,78%
using known vocabulary	3	15,78%
exploring new vocabulary	3	15,78%
skimming	3	15,78%
scanning	2	10,52%
use of dictionary	2	10,52%
using key words	1	5,26%
exploring proper nouns	1	5,26%
exploring dates	1	5,26%
no answer	2	10,52%

Table 6 - Reading strategies mentioned by teachers.

According to these results, it can be seen that there is a very low rate of strategies taught and that most of them are local strategies which, according to Block (1986:473-474) “deal with attempts to understand specific linguistic units”. These include strategies like: paraphrasing, rereading, questioning the meaning of words, clauses and sentences, and solving vocabulary problems”. While answering these two questions (5 and 6) the teachers showed that probably they did not have any specific instruction and did not know how to work with reading strategies and also that they did not even know what reading strategies were, since they asked the researcher about the meaning. There was no awareness about this subject. In fact, many of them were teaching some reading strategies without knowing that. In their minds, they were only giving some hints to facilitate students’ reading task.

Besides the questions above, there were others which referred to specific strategies the researcher proposed to investigate more deeply (already mentioned in chapter 3). Question 7 was: “Before starting to work with a text, do you give any pre-reading activity to your students? Give examples”. 11 teachers (57,89) answered affirmatively, although three of them cited activities which, in fact, were not pre-reading activities. The pre-reading activities mentioned were the following: talk about the theme of the text, exploring the title and pictures, looking for the new words in the dictionary, questions about the presumable theme, and activation of previous knowledge.

The question about the use of skimming was: “10) Do you take your students to do any reading to get the general idea of the text? How? Give examples”. See Table 7 on the next page for answers:

Answers	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
Yes	7	36,84%
No	8	42,10%
teachers who did not know what skimming was	3	15,78%

Table 7 - Skimming

The examples mentioned by the teachers were: exploring new vocabulary, exploring the title and illustrations, exploring keywords and cognates.

When asked about the instruction of scanning - "11) Are specific ideas explored?" (see Table 8):

Answers	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
Yes	8	42,10%
No	10	52,63%

Table 8 - Scanning

"How? Give examples." See table 9:

4 - 21,05%	gave exercises to their children
2 - 10,52%	used the dictionary and thought translation was the best way
1 - 5,63%	text interpretation
1 - 5,63%	no answer how

Table 9 - Examples of scanning exercises.

In the same way, when asked whether they taught the identification of main ideas from the text, and how they did that, they gave the following answers (see Tables 10 and 11 on the next page):

Answers	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
Yes	10	52,63%
No	9	47,36%

Table 10 - Main idea identification.

How	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
through exercises	5	26,31%
through vocabulary	2	10,52%
homework	1	5,63%
oral comprehension	1	5,63%
illustration	1	5,63%
no answer	1	5,63%

Table 11 - Means to teach main idea identification.

Cognates, false-cognates, and keywords were not explored as much as expected (see Table 12):

	Answers	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
Cognates	Yes	7	36,84%
	No	9	47,36%
	Rarely	3	15,78%
False-cognates	Yes	8	42,10%
	No	8	42,10%
	Rarely	3	15,78%
Keywords	Yes	11	57,89%
	No	8	42,10%
	Rarely	0	0%

Table 12 - Exploring cognates, false cognates and keywords.

It is interesting to note that teachers explored more false-cognates than cognates. The researcher believes that teachers explored more false-cognates in spite of the fact that it was not their intention to call attention to them, but because students probably made mistakes when trying to use and to guess the meaning of some false-cognates.

Keywords were much more explored by the teachers than cognates and false-cognates. The way of exploring them was made through searches in the dictionary.

Question 15 was: “Are the questions in the exercises literal or inferential? Give examples”. The answers were as follows in Table 13:

Type of questions	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
Inferential	5	26,31%
Literal	3	15,78%
Both	6	31,57%

Table 13 - Type of questions asked.

There were very few examples given by the teachers. Some of them are included below:

Teacher 1: *“Both forms. Literal and inferential. Example: a text with a current theme, with questions about the text and about students’ life or experiences”* (my translation);

Teacher 2: *“Both. I elaborate comprehension questions, and also questions about students’ point of view”* (my translation).

Most teachers did not explore any resources such as identification of typographic clues, type of text, verb tense markers, relationship among sentences, etc. The question was: “16) Do you explore resources such as identification of typographic clues, relationship among sentences, type of text, etc.? At what moment?”

Answers	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
Yes	4	21,05%
No	12	63,15%

Table 14 - Exploring non-verbal information.

The second part of the question was answered as follows:

Teacher 1: "*Sometimes*" (my translation);

Teacher 2: "*When it is necessary*" (my translation).

Finally, when asked about what other strategies the teachers used, it could be noticed that nothing different from what has already been discussed appeared. The strategies mentioned were the following (see Table 15 below):

Strategies	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
Inferencing	1	5,26%
Illustration	3	15,78%
Pre-reading activities	1	5,26%
Exercises	2	10,52%
Comparing English to Portuguese	2	10,52%

Table 15 - Other strategies.

By the answers given, it could be noticed that very few teachers were acquainted with reading comprehension strategies, very few teachers worked with the focus on reading, and that there was no awareness about the importance of reading comprehension strategies for the development of independent and strategic readers. None of the teachers seemed to have received instruction on reading comprehension strategies, consequently, they were not aware and did not have knowledge about reading strategies. The strategies they mostly used, although discussed in the literature, seemed to have been developed according to the teachers' own discernment. The objective of the reading classes revealed that the strategies were not used to develop reading comprehension but reading as a means to teach grammar, as it can be seen in Table 3. This fact corroborates Coracini's (1995) and Grigoletto's (1995) findings. They observed that the text is many times used as an excuse to teach grammar, vocabulary, or any other language aspect teachers or textbooks consider important to be taught. In this

view, the text is only part of the didactic material. It has no longer the power of changing, but it becomes an illustrative place where students can find linguistic structures, learn new vocabulary and identify the known vocabulary.

I also noticed an increasing interest in and awareness of reading comprehension strategies among the teachers as they were answering the questionnaires (in my presence). When asked about the importance of strategies in text comprehension, 14 teachers (73, 68%) recognized the importance of strategies in text comprehension and only 5 (26,31%) did not show their opinions about the subject. All teachers believed that students would learn easily the strategies if they were taught and that they would have no difficulties in learning if instructed.

The reading strategies which had been taught mostly were the ones which had more to do with vocabulary: false-cognates, key-words, cognates. This fact corroborates the conception students and teachers have about text and reading, discussed in Grigoletto (1995). She observed in her study that reading was understood as a linear task which serves to recover the meaning word by word. Another important verification in this way is the kind of reading practiced in class: 73,68% of the teachers work with both silent and oral reading. About the practice of oral reading Grigoletto (1995:86-87) says that students and teachers have “the illusion that the meaning is being naturally revealed while words and sentences are being materialized in the act of speaking. Teachers and students act as if oral reading meant the completeness of text comprehension” (my translation). She observed that oral reading has been the only way to approach the text as a whole and, if we follow the class sequence we notice that it is very common to go to lexical exercises after oral reading. These facts corroborate, once more, *the-group-of--words-that-can-be-studied-separately* conception of text, according to which the meaning of a text is constructed only in a word by word way.

Nevertheless, teachers cited more than those lexical-based strategies. Strategies like exploring main ideas (52,63%), scanning (42,10%), skimming (36,84%), exploring illustration (36,84%), pre-reading activities (31,57%), literal and inferential questions (31,57%) were also cited, although most of their occurrences did not reach 50%.

The second research question was:

4.2. 2) Are teachers and students aware of the importance and function of reading strategies?

In relation to the teachers, results showed that most of them did not teach reading strategies to their students. Few teachers answered that they taught reading strategies and the number of strategies mentioned was small. Some strategies which were mentioned were: exploring words, exploring main ideas, scanning, skimming, exploring illustration, pre-reading activities and literal and inferential question, as it was discussed above. While analyzing the strategies teachers taught to their students, it was noticed that for most of them reading strategies were a new subject. As consistent with the results already discussed, most of them did not know what reading strategies are, neither what their function and their importance for reading comprehension are. The few teachers who knew what reading strategies were and knew about their importance, but did not actually have much instruction about the subject and taught students in the way as they thought was best, that is, with no specific methodology. But an interesting point is that awareness was not worked with the students.

When teachers worked on reading strategies with their students, they did not mention the word *strategy*, they did not emphasize the importance of learning strategies, they did not explain the function of the strategies they were teaching. Thus,

what they taught their students were some skills and their use. This fact could be seen in the students' tests. Many students used strategies but they did not know how to explain them or to name them. They seemed to know that there were some techniques they could use to help them to answer the questions and comprehend the text, but nothing more than this. This conclusion was reached through the gathering and analysis of comments students gave in their tests about the strategies or techniques they used to complete the tasks. The word "strategy" was not written in the test, but it was mentioned on purpose by the researcher when she gave students instructions for the test, and every time they asked questions in which the words "strategy" or "reading strategies" were part of the answer. The researcher did this in order to make students remember about strategies (in case they were acquainted with them), informally, without imposing on them. If they were acquainted with the word and with strategies they surely would use it. But this did not happen.

None of the students (in the two groups) used the word "strategy" nor terms which could denote awareness of what they were doing. In the metacognitive comments they made to explain their answers, there were terms like: *"words that I know"*, *"words that are easy to understand"*, *"words which are similar to Portuguese"*, *"techniques"* (only one occurrence), instead of using terms such as: cognates, keywords, strategies, background knowledge, etc. Moreover, many students used the terms: *"deduction"*, *"I saw in the title"*, *"I underlined keywords"*, *"through the vocabulary"*. This shows that they were aware of the presence and importance of some words in the text, which they could base their comprehension on, such as keywords, cognates, the words they already knew. They also showed awareness about the title, deduction, prediction, use of dictionary, nouns, and illustration. In Romainville's research (1994), results showed that the students who had successful performances in reading comprehension were

those who were particularly aware of their cognitive strategies and of the factors which influenced them.

The results lead me to the conclusion that the lack of awareness was the decisive factor which made the performance of both groups (A and B) be the same, although one of the teachers said that she gave her students instructions on reading strategies.

4. 3. 3) Do all the students tested use reading strategies?

First of all, it is important to remember the two groups which were tested: Group A (twenty-eight students) was the group whose teacher said that she gave instruction on reading comprehension strategies and Group B (seventeen students) is the one which underwent traditional teaching. Another interesting aspect to be remembered is that through the teachers' responses to the questionnaires it was observed that even the teachers who said that they taught reading strategies to their students probably had no proper instruction and awareness about the subject.

Students were tested in the following strategies: pre-reading, activation of previous knowledge, exploring cognates, identifying keywords, exploring text organization, text type, deduction, exploring the title, use of dictionary, getting main ideas, literal and inferential comprehension, general comprehension (skimming), awareness about the use of strategies. A non-structured question was made asking whether the students could tell about any other strategies they had used.

When asked about techniques students used to answer the questions and to understand the texts, Group A differed from Group B only a little in relation to the number of strategies each student used, the type of strategies and the way they described them (considering only the students who completed the task). Whereas Group B cited a

mean of two strategies per student, Group A cited a mean of two and three. See Tables 16 and 17 below:

Group A

Number of strategies cited	Number of students	Percentage of students
1	5	17,58%
2	6	21,42%
3	6	21,42%
more than 3 strategies	3	10,71%
no response	8	28,57%

Table 16 - Number of strategies mentioned by Group A.

Group B

Number of strategies cited	Number of students	Percentage of students
1	3	17,64%
2	12	70,58%
3	2	11,76%
more than 3 strategies	0	0%
no response	0	0%

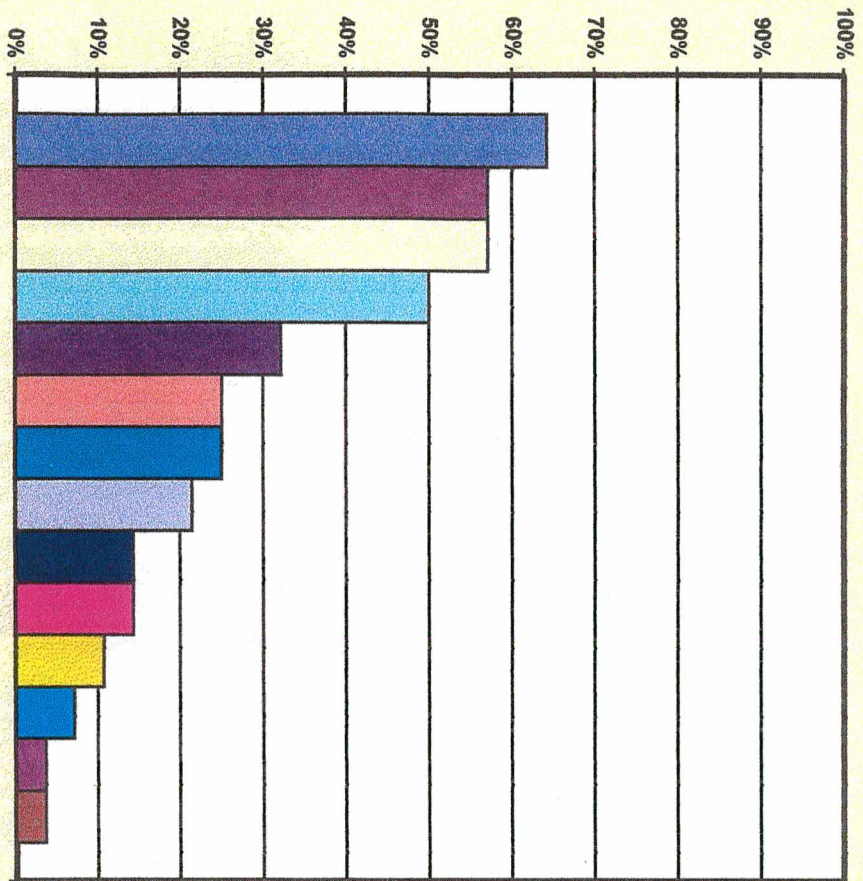
Table 17 - Number of strategies mentioned by Group B.

Concerning the type of strategies cited, the difference between the two groups increases. Group A cited more strategies than Group B and more students described those strategies, that is, they described what they did to answer the questions and to complete the tasks in the test. The strategies reported in Table 18 and also showed in the graphs on pages 50 and 51 are in the students' own words.

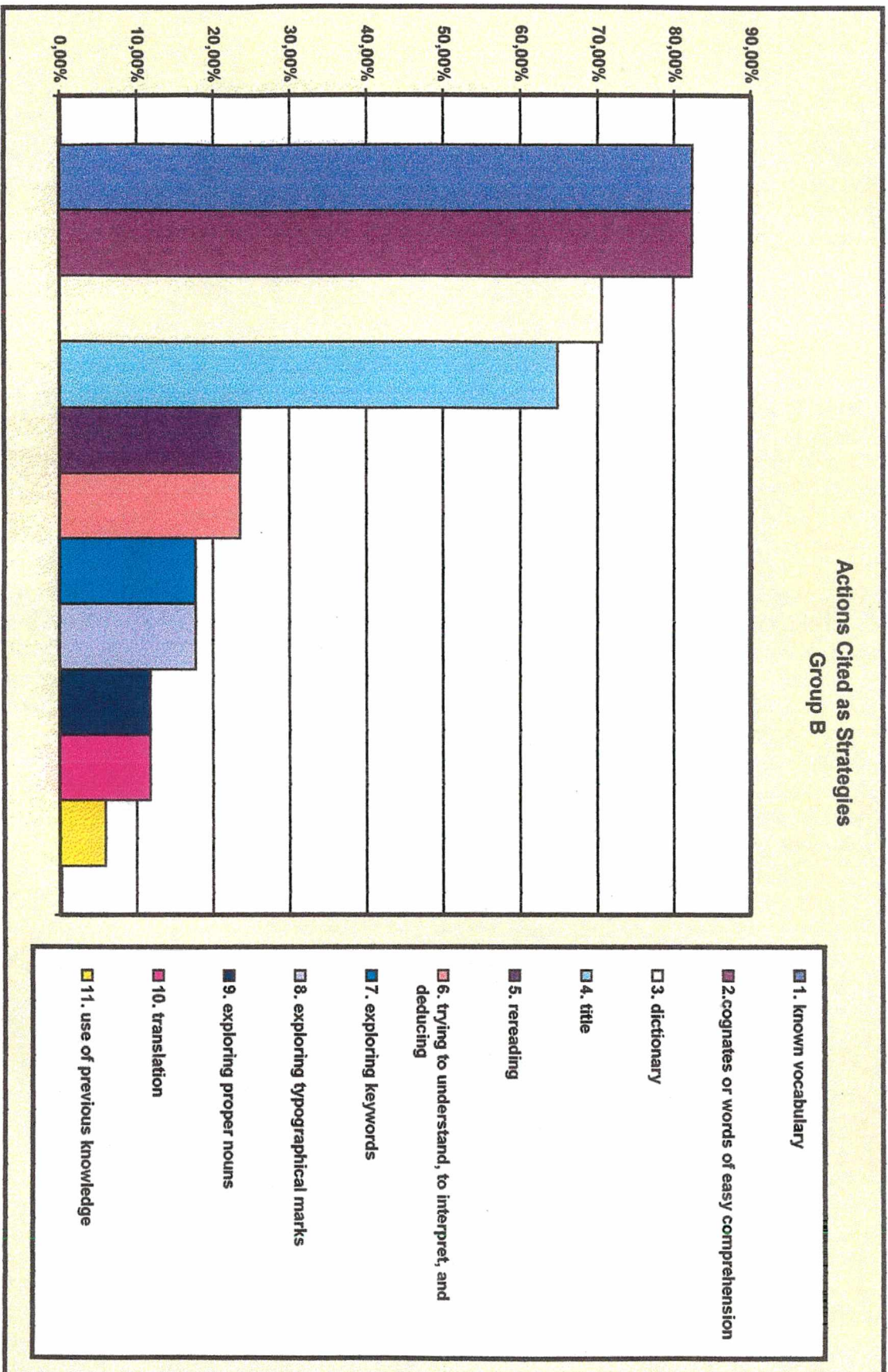
Actions cited as strategies	Number of students	Percentage of students
Group A		
1. rereading	18	64,28%
2. use of dictionary	16	57,14%
3. deduction	16	57,14%
4. trying to understand from the known words	14	50%
5. trying to understand by interpreting	9	32,14%
6. exploring the title	7	25%
7. paying attention while reading	7	25%
8. words similar to Portuguese	6	21,42%
9. underlying words	4	14,28%
10. keywords	4	14,28%
11. translation	3	10,71%
12. word association	2	7,14%
13. exploring proper nouns	1	3,57%
14. answering questions	1	3,57%
Group B		
1. known vocabulary	14	82,35%
2. cognates or words of easy comprehension	14	82,35%
3. dictionary	12	70,58%
4. title	11	64,79%
5. rereading	4	23,52%
6. trying to understand, to interpret, and deducing	4	23,52%
7. exploring keywords	3	17,64%
8. exploring typographical marks	3	17,64%
9. exploring proper nouns	2	11,76%
10. translation	2	11,76%
11. use of previous knowledge	1	5,88%

Table 18 - Strategies mentioned by the two groups.

Actions cited as Strategies
Group A



- 1. rereading
- 2. use of dictionary
- 3. deduction
- 4. trying to understand from the known words
- 5. trying to understand by interpreting
- 6. exploring the title
- 7. paying attention while reading
- 8. words similar to Portuguese
- 9. underling words
- 10. keywords
- 11. translation
- 12. word association
- 13. exploring proper nouns
- 14. answering questions



In comparing teachers' answers to the questionnaires and students' answers, the preference for the use of local strategies is observed. One possible reason for this is the fact that the text is in a foreign language, and the need to understand the words drives the students to create, formulate and use local strategies.

General strategies, which according to Block (1986:472,473), "include comprehension gathering and comprehension monitoring strategies", are the following: anticipating content, recognizing text structure, integrating information, questioning information in the text, interpreting the text, using general knowledge, commenting on behavior or process, monitoring comprehension, correcting behavior, and reacting to the text. These strategies were also present in the students' answers.

The students' test had specific tasks which were designed to investigate some of the strategies mentioned above.

There were two pre-reading activities which explored use of textual cues and activation of previous knowledge in order to come up with the subject of the text. The first question, "1) a) Look at the text, what is it about?" , had the answers presented in Table 19 below:

Answers	Group A	Group B
correct	15 - 53,57%	9 - 52,94%
partially correct	10 - 35,71%	8 - 47,05%
wrong	3 - 10,71%	0 - 0%

Table 19 - Subject of the text.

And the second question: "How did you get the conclusion?", presented the following results (see Table 20 on the next page):

Answers based on:	Group A	Group B
title	6 - 21,42%	10 - 58,82%
brief reading	4 - 14,28%	6 - 35,29%
some specific words	4 - 14,28%	7 - 41,17%

Table 20 - Use of textual cues.

Although the results were around 50%, they can be considered good results, since students who answered could point clearly the strategies they used. The results showed that the students really searched the general idea of the text and corroborated the use of strategies that their teachers had said they worked with their students: exploration of vocabulary and title.

Concerning activation of previous knowledge, the results showed that it was timidly explored (see Table 21 below):

Answers	Group A	Group B
no response	10 - 35,71%	2 - 11,76%
wrong	4 - 14,28%	4 - 23,52%
partially right	5 - 17,85%	7 - 41,17%
completely right	9 - 32,14%	4 - 23,52%

Table 21 - Activation of prior knowledge.

Text organization was tested through the question: "5) a) Did you notice any organization in the text? b) How did the author organize ideas in the text?" The answers were the following (see Table 22 below):

Answers	Group A	Group B
correct	2 - 7,14%	4 - 23,52%
partially correct	1 - 3,57%	2 - 11,76%

Table 22 - Text organization perception.

When main ideas from each paragraph were tested: “10) a) Which is the theme of each paragraph? b) Which lines indicate the theme of each paragraph? c) How did you find the answer?” The result was the following (see Tables 23 and 24 below):

Group A

Students	1st paragraph	2nd paragraph	3rd paragraph
responded	16 - 57,14%	15 - 53,57%	13 - 46,42%
no response	12 - 42,85%	13 - 46,42%	15 - 53,57%
right answers	7 - 25%	3 - 10,71%	9 - 32,14%
wrong answers	3 - 10,71%	6 - 21,42%	2 - 7,14%
partially correct	6 - 21,42%	6 - 21,42%	2 - 7,14%

Table 23 - Main idea identification by Group A.

Group B

Students	1st paragraph	2nd paragraph	3rd paragraph
responded	15 - 88,23%	15 - 88,23%	14 - 82,35%
no response	2 - 11,76%	2 - 11,76%	3 - 17,64%
right answers	2 - 11,76%	6 - 35,29%	8 - 47,05%
wrong answers	4 - 23,52%	5 - 29,41%	5 - 29,41%
partially correct	9 - 52,94%	4 - 23,52%	1 - 5,88%

Table 24 - Main idea identification by Group B.

Many students in Group A left a high number of tasks with no response. The non responses were counted and considered in the results as if the students did not know how to solve the task. The researcher noticed that students in Group A were not as collaborative, and did not take the test as seriously as Group B. Comparing the two groups, although Group B had a better performance than Group A in getting the main idea of the paragraphs, none of the groups succeeded in that task, since none had a

minimum of 50% of correctness. This fact shows little or no instruction in getting the main idea or that students did not learn what was taught.

In order to test scanning, the researcher asked three questions about specific ideas in the text. Questions 7, 8, and 9 respectively: “7) a) What has the contact with animals caused to people? b) In which line did you find the answer? c) How did you find the answer? 8) a) Which people were submitted to the research mentioned in the text? b) Point the line you found the answer. c) How did you find the answer? 9) a) Say what was the solution researchers gave to the problem. b) Point the line you found the answer. c) How did you find the answer?”. The results are in Tables 25 and 26 below:

Group A

Answers	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9
no response	3 - 10,71%	4 - 14,48%	6 - 21,42%
responses	25 - 82,28%	24 - 85,71%	23 - 82,14%
wrong answers	5 - 17,85%	7 - 25%	10 - 35,71%
partially correct	2 - 7,14%	6 - 21,42%	6 - 21,42%
right answers	18 - 64,28%	11 - 39,28%	6 - 21,42%

Table 25 - Group A's responses to questions 7, 8 and 9.

Group B

Answers	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9
no response	0	0	2 - 11,76%
responses	17 - 100%	17 - 100%	15 - 88,23%
wrong answers	4 - 23,52%	6 - 35,29%	7 - 41,17%
partially correct	0	2 - 11,76%	2 - 11,76%
right answers	13 - 76,47%	9 - 52,94%	6 - 35,29%

Table 26 - Group B's responses to questions 7, 8 and 9.

The high rate of responses and right responses demonstrate the tendency students have to answer specific questions, that is, the simple fact of having a literal question about a specific topic, which students can easily find the answer in the text, induces

them to search for it. This fact exemplifies and corroborates the ‘old- questionnaire-culture’ in schools, that is, the teacher gives a text, asks many literal questions about it and students answer them. What I mean is that students have a lot of experience and training in locating literal information in the text, independently of being in other subjects (History, Science, or others) or languages (Portuguese, English, or any other). Notice that these three questions (7, 8, 9) were not general and inferential as the ones about the paragraphs’ main ideas. Students here felt more confident in finding the answer, since the answer could be easily found in the text and they did not have to think much of what they read nor to interpret the information. Here, the bottom-up (Gough, 1972, in Coracini, 1995) mode of reading is predominant. The reader is the recipient and the text is the source of meaning.

The research also tested if students had instruction about type of texts. Dias (1996:56) discussed about three types of text: “(1) the informative or denotative”, which is the case of “Animal Allergy”, (the text tested in the 4th question); “(2) the emotive or connotative”; and “(3) the persuasive or text of appeal” (the second text in the test). Taking this information into consideration we see that although most students came near an acceptable answer, citing examples of informative texts (such as report, scientific text) only Group B, with 23, 52% of its students, answered correctly. This fact shows that probably none of the groups had instruction about type of texts or that they did not learn what was taught, although students showed a good intuition (see Tables 27 and 28 on the next page):

“4) a) What type of text is this?”

Responses	Group A	Group B
responses	28 - 100%	17 - 100%
report	16 - 57,14%	9 - 52,94%
documentary	3 - 10,71%	1 - 5,88%
scientific text	2 - 7,14%	2 - 11,76%
journalistic	1 - 3,57%	4 - 23,52%
informative	1 - 3,57%	4 - 23,52%

Table 27 - Type of text.

“4) b) In your opinion, where was it taken from?”

Source of text	Group A	Group B
Newspaper	6 - 21,42%	4 - 23,52%
Magazine	3 - 10,71%	1 - 5,88%
Magazine or newspaper	3 - 10,71%	5 - 29,41%
Book	2 - 7,14%	0
Scientific Book	2 - 7,14%	0
Medical journal	2 - 7,14%	1 - 5,88%
Australian newspaper	1 - 3,57%	0
“New Scientist Journal”	1 - 3,57%	0
Magazine, book or newspaper	0	1 - 5,88%
Book or magazine	0	1 - 5,88%

Table 28 - Source of text.

These results show that none of the groups knew how to explore the type of text, not even to explore the place where the text could be found. Group A had a much better performance in this task than Group B, since some students made more probable suggestions, citing publications in the area of the theme of the text, and one student took note of the name of the source in the text. The general lack of awareness in this task showed the improbability of instruction in exploring the type and source of text in both groups. Comparing these results to the answers the teachers of these two groups gave when asked about this subject, we could notice that in fact the teacher from Group

B answered that she did not give any instruction to her students, and the teacher from Group A was not clear in her answer.

Teacher from Group A: *"Sometimes. Whenever I feel that the exploration of those resources can help with text comprehension"* (my translation).

The use of dictionary was also investigated and had in Group B a high frequency of use.

Students use of dictionary	Group A - 53,57%	Group B - 82,35%
more than 8 times	1 - 3,57%	0
more than 3 times	6 - 21,42%	1 - 5,88%
3 times	1 - 3,57%	5 - 29,41%
twice	4 - 14,28%	3 - 17,64%
once	3 - 10,71%	1 - 5,88%
no mention of time	0	4 - 23,52%

Table 29 - Use of dictionary.

The high rate of using the dictionary was expected by the researcher, once the students were beginners in English and did not have much knowledge of vocabulary. This result was also expected since their conception of reading is based on words, word meaning.

Concerning inferencing, in one of the questions, it was asked: "11) Give your opinion about the theme of the text". Students wrote little about it. Their inferences were not longer than two lines and they did not add anything other than what was already in the text. Examples of answers which were considered correct were:

Student from Group A: *"It is an important theme which makes us aware of the importance of protection in laboratory experiments, place where any negligence can be fatal"* (my translation).

Student from Group B: *"It is an important research, since many people who have tame animals suffer from some kind of allergy, and don't know the cause of the allergy"* (my translation);

There were also answers considered weak and unclear, such as:

Student from Group A: *"That people take care"* (my translation);

Student from Group B: *"Nice!"* (my translation)

See the results in Table 30 below:

Responses	Group A	Group B
response	22 - 82,14%	16 - 94,11%
no response	5 - 17,85%	1 - 5,88%
in the theme	10 - 35,71%	2 - 11,76%
out of the theme	10 - 35,71%	2 - 11,76%
partially in the theme	2 - 7,14%	12 - 70,58%

Table 30 - Inferencing.

According to Just and Carpenter (1987:456), "good readers not only understand the literal facts in a passage, but they also make the appropriate inferences, note the organization of the material and attend to the authors' tone and approach." In the present research, it could be said that, in spite of the high rate of correct answers, the quality of the students' answers was not as good as it should be (see examples above).

General comprehension was measured after a pre-reading activity and after a task of activation of previous knowledge. The general comprehension task was: "3) a) What is the general idea of the text? b) What did you do to find it?". See Table 31 on the next page for the answers:

	Group A	Group B
Performance	Number of Students	Number of Students
no response	1 - 3,57%	0
80 to 100%	8 - 28,57%	7 - 41,17%
50 to 79%	1 - 3,57%	8 - 47,05%
0 to 50%	16 - 57,14%	2 - 11,76%

Table 31 - General comprehension.

The researcher also asked students: “c) How many readings did you do until now?”. The answers are shown in Table 32 below:

Number of readings	Group A	Group B
once	6 - 21,42%	6 - 35,29%
twice	8 - 28,57%	4 - 23,52%
three times	6 - 21,42%	5 - 29,41%
more than four times	3 - 10,71%	2 - 11,76%
no response	4 - 14,28%	0

Table 32 - Number of readings and re-readings.

The strategy students mostly cited to answer this task was only “re-reading”, “reading many times”, and “read”, which actually has importance but sometimes it is not enough, especially when the student does not know the vocabulary and text organization. Very few students cited other strategies which were really appropriate to the task, for example: exploring the title, looking for known and repeated words, using the dictionary, through the reading of the first paragraph, etc. - strategies which were really appropriate to the task.

The test also investigated the use of vocabulary, that is, if students explored cognates and key-words. Many students counted with cognates in order to comprehend the text, although they did not know about these words. No student from any of the two groups cited the term “cognates” in their tests (see Table 33 on the next page):

Use of cognates	Group A	Group B
mentioned	20 - 71,42%	12 - 70,58%
did not mention	7 - 21,42%	6 - 35,29%
cited the word - cognate	0	0

Table 33 - Use of cognates.

Both groups referred to cognates as *"words easy to understand"*, *"words that I already knew the meaning"*, *"easy words"*, *"words similar to Portuguese"*, etc. Corroborating the teachers' questionnaire answers, cognates were probably not taught, although they were intuitively used by students.

Similarly to what happened to the results of the cognates task, students from both groups used keywords to base their comprehension, though only intuitively.

Use of keywords	Group A	Group B
mentioned	21 - 75%	15 - 88,23%
did not mention	6 - 21,42%	2 - 11,76%
cited the term keyword	0	1 - 5,88%

Table 34 - Use of keywords.

Both groups named keywords as *"important words"* and *"some words"*.

Concluding, not all the students tested used reading strategies. Actually, students used strategies very timidly. Exploring cognates and keywords, scanning and the use of dictionary were the strategies mostly used by the students. However, I emphasize that once their use were almost unconscious, those could not be considered as strategies but skills.

4.4. 4) Is there any difference in performance between students who received instruction in reading strategies and students who did not?

In order to verify students' general performance on the test, only cognitive answers were taken into consideration. The tests were graded according to a percentage of correct answers - from 0 to 100%. The results were the following (see Table 35):

Percentage of correct answers	Group A	Group B
0 to 9	1 - 3,57%	0
10 to 19	2 - 7,14%	1 - 5,88%
20 to 29	4 - 14,28%	1 - 5,88%
30 to 39	4 - 14,28%	1 - 5,88%
40 to 49	4 - 14,28%	3 - 17,64%
50 to 59	2 - 7,14%	5 - 29,40%
60 to 69	4 - 14,28%	0
70 to 79	2 - 7,14%	1 - 5,88%
80 to 89	4 - 14,28%	1 - 5,88%
90 to 100	1 - 3,57%	4 - 23,52%

Table 35 - Total performance on the reading comprehension test.

Although it might appear at first that the two groups had a similar performance, this was not exactly what happened. In Group A, 53,57% of the students had a performance lower than 50% of correctness and 46,42% had a performance from 50 to 100% while in Group B 35,29% had a performance lower than 50% and 64,70% of the students had a performance better than 50% (as it can be seen in Table 35). These results were not expected since Group A, the group whose teacher said that she had taught reading strategies, had a worse performance than Group B. I should say that two factors might have influenced these results: Firstly, lack of awareness - no group had awareness about reading strategies, though one of them had informal instruction on some strategies. The lack of awareness seems to have put both groups in the same

conditions since the use of strategies implies metacognitive awareness, intention, consciousness, while skills do not (Dole et al., 1991). Therefore, it appears that both groups were skilled but not exactly strategic. Secondly, Group B took the research more seriously, answered more questions and gave more complete answers than Group A.

4. 5. 5) Are students from municipal schools of Florianópolis good or poor readers in English?

Concerning the conception of text and reading, the researcher arrives to the same conclusions discussed by Grigoletto (1995:86) in her work with students from elementary and high schools. They see reading in a foreign language as looking at a group of words, where some are known but some are not, and as the text is being read, the reader juxtaposes the words as if s/he was adding one by one, and the result is the recovering of its meaning. Most people see meaning as something which can be read in the text and the reader has to recover it while reading. Many readers believe that this meaning recovering happens by translating word by word. In the present study, a similar tendency was evident when a special concern and awareness of vocabulary is noticed. In Group A, 50% of the students assumed they used the dictionary, while in Group B this percentage was greater: 82,35%. Strategies including vocabulary were the ones used mostly by both groups: key-words were explored by 75% from Group A and 88,23% from Group B; cognates were explored by 71,42% from Group A and 70,58% from Group B. Meanwhile, when asked about techniques they used to better comprehend the text and answer the questions in the test, (a very general and enclosing metacognitive question), the students showed very low awareness of reading

comprehension strategies. The “technique” mostly mentioned by Group A (64,28%) was “reading” while in Group B it was the third mostly mentioned technique. This percentage demonstrates the low level of reading comprehension strategies’ awareness they had. Other strategies were also mentioned, though with less frequency. Group A cited deduction 57,14% times as well as the use of dictionary (57,14%), 50% explored the known vocabulary; 25% could deduce the text’s general idea through the title; cognates and words “of easy comprehension” (as many students named cognates) had 21,42% of use. Group B had more students exploring the following strategies: known vocabulary-82,35%; cognates and words “of easy comprehension”-82,34%; use of dictionary-70,58%; exploring the title-64,70%; keywords and typographical marks 17,64%; translation and exploring of proper names-11,76%; and background knowledge was cited 5,88%. These findings corroborate the tendency students (who don’t have instruction in reading strategies) have to base their comprehension in known words (which can be cognates or words that they had already learned and assimilated the meaning) observed in Grigolettos’ study (1995). Students tend to elect a text content hypothesis from a known (or a supposed familiar word) and base their reading in that hypothesis even when it is not adequate anymore. Because of the fact they see texts as a group of words which have in themselves all the meaning, students believe that the readers’ role is only to associate one word with the other and translate them.

Comparing the differences between good and poor readers Jones et al. (1987), Block (1986), Paris et al. (1983), and others observed that a strategic reader is a good reader and both are fostered by development and instruction. Good readers use a larger quantity of strategies and use them more effectively. Good readers are able to monitor their comprehension, they are more aware of the strategies and use them flexibly. They choose the strategies they use, according to the text and objectives. Good readers are

more able to detect main ideas and details, they note problems in what they are reading, they use clues in order to anticipate information in the text, among many other characteristics. Therefore, following these characteristics, the conclusion arrived is that students from district schools of Florianópolis are poor readers. They know how to read but they do not use strategies effectively and they do not show intention in their answers, awareness about reading comprehension strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This chapter is divided into three main parts: Final Considerations, Limitations of the Study, and Pedagogical Implications.

5. 1. Final Considerations

The present research had as objectives to investigate if students from district schools of Florianópolis were good or poor readers, trying to make their profile in relation to strategic reading; and to investigate teachers' and students' conception of text and reading classes.

The teachers were tested through a questionnaire and the results showed that most of them did not develop text comprehension with their students. Actually, they saw text and reading classes as a means of teaching other aspects of the language such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and they saw reading as a way to retain the content given to students. Through the questionnaire, it was noticed that teachers were not aware of the importance of reading comprehension nor of reading strategies. They did not know exactly what reading strategies were, their importance, function, and types of strategies available. It is possible that teachers themselves had not been instructed in this subject. Although many of those teachers answered that they taught reading strategies, results showed that they were mistaken. In fact, they provided students with techniques which, if developed with awareness and intention, would be considered strategies, such as using the dictionary, skimming, scanning (these two, without

knowing the names), illustration, exploring the title, and a few aspects concerning vocabulary: cognates, false-cognates, keywords, and known vocabulary.

Concerning teachers' and students' conception of reading, this research supports previous findings (Coracini, 1995; Grigoletto, 1995, Goodmann, 1967; Carvalho, 1984 and others) which observed that the reading conception in the foreign language does not focus on reading comprehension, or on the changing of mind through the interaction between the reader and the text, but on understanding the meaning of each word or each sentence separately, constructing meaning word by word, finding the exact place in the text where the answers to the teachers' questions are located, and identifying lexical and syntactical points in the text.

Results of the students' tests showed that students had the same conception of text considering it as a string of words hanging together. This was not a surprise since this idea was shared by their teachers who probably reproduced it to their students. As good students, they learned their lesson very well.

Concerning students' profile in relation to reading strategies, it was observed that students did not actually use strategies in order to comprehend texts. Results showed a tendency students had to give importance to word-meaning: the use of dictionary, and the basing of comprehension on some words such as cognates, keywords and words whose meanings they already knew, word-deduction and exploring the title were strategies mostly used as they tried to answer the questions about the text. Once more the conception of constructing meaning through words is corroborated. This conception is so strong in those students that even the fact that their teachers did not give instruction about cognates to them, by intuition they used them. Scanning was also a well succeeded strategy. In a general view, students' performance in the tests was not good for any of the two groups, since they were no better than 64%.

5. 2. Limitations of the Study and suggestions for further research

Some factors influenced the results negatively:

1. Group A was not as collaborative as Group B. As it could be seen in the data analysis, a great percentage of students did not answer many of the tasks and questions. This fact affected the results of some tasks. On the other hand, Group B took the test more seriously and had a great percentage of responses, a great concern in order to give correct answers, due to a more mature psychological profile, a better relationship with their teacher, and a better preparation for the research. The preparation had been given through talks the teacher had with her students in order to make them aware of the importance of the research. This importance seemed not to have been emphasized in Group A.

2. One of the questions was eliminated. The task tested students' capacity of deducing the meaning of some words: "Read text no. 2 carefully and try to discover the meaning of the underlined words (get, eat). How did you find the meaning of these words? What resources did you use?". The reason for the elimination was the fact that in spite of being instructed not to use the dictionary to answer this specific question, the researcher had no means to control students. Because of this, many students looked up the words in the dictionary, and besides this, many students knew the meaning of the words.

3. Although the study had a large number of students being tested, they may not represent all students in *Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis*, since they are from two groups only.

4. A questionnaire with structured questions about reading strategies could have been applied to students after the tests in order to investigate better their knowledge about some strategies.

5. The oral protocols used in Block's (1986) and Baretta's (1998) works were not used in this study (instead, written questionnaires and tests were used) due to the large number of subjects on one hand and short time the researcher had to do the research on the other hand.

6. A summary could have been included in the students' test in order to measure their general comprehension of the text.

These limitations can be seen as suggestions and stimuli for further studies.

5. 3. Pedagogical Implications

As a diagnosis, this research confirmed the researcher's expectations in relation to students' and teachers' conception and instruction in reading strategies, a fact that will enable the creation of a program of instruction in this subject. Since the teachers do not have opportunities to meet each other, to exchange ideas, to update, and since there is not a common program to all schools, that is, each teacher teaches what s/he thinks is better for his/her students (with each one's limitations), a common program of instruction in this important and unknown subject will give teachers more power, motivation and knowledge to work. Instructional programs as the ones reported by Bittencourt (1989), Gaskins and Gaskins (1997), Kameenui et al. (1997), Carvalho (1984) and others are examples which have to be followed, since the improvement in reading comprehension when students receive instruction in reading strategies is assured. For students, working with reading will give them clearer objectives and they

will have more opportunities to use their knowledge in English than if the emphasis is on the other skills (speaking, listening, and writing).

The very fact of participating in the present research, apparently, made many teachers think about their own practice, think more about reading and the importance of reading strategies instruction, increasing their interest to participate in a program about this subject.

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APPENDIX 1 - TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
CENTRO DE COMUNICAÇÃO E EXPRESSÃO
DEPARTAMENTO DE LÍNGUA E LITERATURA ESTRANGEIRAS
CURSO DE PÓS GRADUAÇÃO EM INGLÊS
ORIENTADORA: PROF. DRA. LÊDA MARIA BRAGA TOMITCH
MESTRANDA: DÓRIS REGINA MAES

O presente questionário é parte integrante de uma pesquisa de Mestrado sobre os efeitos do ensino de estratégias de leitura nas aulas de leitura em língua inglesa do ensino regular.

QUESTIONÁRIO DIRIGIDO AOS PROFESSORES DE INGLÊS DA REDE MUNICIPAL DE ENSINO DE FLORIANÓPOLIS.

1. Você usa livro didático? Qual o livro didático adotado?
2. Você trabalha todas as habilidades (leitura, escrita, produção oral e compreensão oral) com a mesma intensidade ou enfatiza o ensino de alguma delas?
Caso afirmativo, qual das habilidades você trabalha mais?
3. Qual é a frequência da prática de leitura em suas aulas (1 ou 2 vezes por semana, a cada 15 dias, etc. e quanto tempo de cada aula)?
4. Que tipo de trabalho você desenvolve com seus alunos em relação à língua inglesa?
5. Quando você dá prática de leitura, você ensina estratégias para seus alunos?
6. Que tipo de estratégias de leitura você ensina?
7. Antes de iniciar um texto, você faz alguma atividade de pré leitura? Cite exemplos.

8. Ao trabalhar um texto, quantas vezes, aproximadamente, o aluno o lê e relê?
9. Como é feita a leitura, oral ou silenciosa?
10. É feita uma leitura para se tirar a idéia geral (skimming) do texto? De que forma? Cite exemplos de alguma atividade.
11. As idéias mais específicas (scanning) são exploradas? De que forma? Cite exemplos.
12. Você ensina os alunos a extraírem as idéias principais do texto? Como? Explique.
13. Você explora a identificação de cognatos e falsos cognatos? Como? Dê exemplos.
14. Você explora a identificação de palavras-chave? Como? Dê exemplos.
15. As perguntas que você faz sobre o texto são literais ou interpretativas (envolvem inferências)? Dê exemplos.
16. São explorados, no texto, recursos do tipo: identificação de pistas tipográficas, tipo de texto, relação entre frases, etc.? Em que momento?
17. Que outras estratégias você ensina para melhorar a compreensão do texto?
18. Na sua opinião elas ajudam na compreensão do texto?
19. Os alunos aplicam as estratégias ensinadas? Como você percebe que isso acontece?
20. Como você acha que seus alunos vêem a leitura:
 - 1º - Eles a vêem como uma atividade prazerosa ou simplesmente como uma obrigação?
 - 2º - Eles conseguem assimilar o conteúdo ensinado?

APPENDIX 2 - STUDENTS' TEST

Este teste é parte integrante de uma pesquisa de Mestrado sobre a leitura nas aulas de língua inglesa do ensino regular, da Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis.

NOME:

ESCOLA:

Responda com seriedade a todas as perguntas e itens, não deixe nada em branco.

TEXTO Nº 1: ANIMAL ALLERGY

1. Dê uma breve olhada no texto. Qual o assunto que ele aborda? Como você chegou a essa conclusão?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. O quê você já sabe sobre esse assunto?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Responda as seguintes perguntas, de acordo com o texto nº 1: ANIMAL ALLERGY.

3. a) Qual a idéia geral do texto? b) O quê você fez para encontrá-la? c) Quantas leituras do texto você fez até agora?

a).....

.....

b).....

.....

c).....

.....

4. a) Que tipo de texto é esse? b) De onde você acha que ele foi retirado?

a).....

b).....

5. a) Você notou algum tipo de organização no texto? b) Como o autor organizou as idéias no texto?

- a).....
b).....
.....

6. a) Você se apoiou em algumas palavras para melhor compreender o texto? b) Quais? c) Que tipo de palavras são essas? d) Por quê você as escolheu?

- a).....
b).....
.....
c).....
.....
d).....
.....

7.a) O quê o contato com animais tem causado às pessoas? b) Em que linha do texto você encontrou a resposta? c) Como você chegou a essa resposta?

- a).....
.....
b).....
c).....
.....

8. a) Que pessoas foram submetidas à pesquisa mencionada no texto? b) Em que linha do texto você encontrou a resposta? c) Como você encontrou a resposta?

- a).....
.....
b).....
c).....
.....

9.a) Qual a solução que os pesquisadores indicam para amenizar o problema? b)Em que linha do texto você encontrou a resposta? c) Como você encontrou essa resposta?

- a).....
.....
b).....
c).....
.....

10. a) Qual o assunto de cada parágrafo? b) Que linhas melhor indicam o assunto de cada parágrafo? c) Como você chegou a esta conclusão?

1º parágrafo/a).....

b).....

c).....

2º parágrafo/a).....

b).....

c).....

3º parágrafo/a).....

b).....

c).....

11. Dê sua opinião sobre o assunto do texto.

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Faça comentários sobre as técnicas que você usou neste texto e costuma usar para entender melhor um texto em inglês.

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. a) Você usou o dicionário? b) Quantas vezes?

a) () sim

() não

b) () 1 vez

() mais de 3 vezes

() 2 vezes

() mais de 8 vezes

() 3 vezes

.....

TEXTO Nº2

1. Analise atentamente o texto Nº 2 e **tente descobrir** o significado das palavras sublinhadas.

- (1) get-.....
 (2) eat-.....

2. Como você descobriu o significado das palavras sublinhadas? Que recursos você usou?

- (1) get-.....
 (2) eat-

3. Qual a informação que o texto nos fornece?

.....

4.a)Que título você daria para esse texto? b) Justifique sua resposta.

- a).....
 b).....

5. De todo o teste, diga: a) Quais as questões que você sentiu mais dificuldades para responder. b) Quais foram as suas maiores dificuldades.

- a).....
 b).....

TEXT0 N° 1:
ANIMAL ALLERGY

NEW SCIENTIST, 4 NOVEMBER 1995

1 People who handle laboratory animals at work need plenty of tissues and lots of
 2 eyedrops. An Australian study of 228 researchers, teachers, students and animal
 3 house workers from Sydney found that more than half are allergic to the animals.
 4 "This is a surprisingly high number", says Margaret Stuart from the School of
 5 Biological Science at Macquarie University in Sydney.

6 The study, reported in the latest issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*, reveals
 7 that of those exposed to laboratory animals for three month or more, 56 per cent
 8 experience irritation of the skin, eyes or nose. Almost a quarter suffer from asthma.

9 Stuart and her team say that people should wear protective clothing - only 44 per
 10 cent of those surveyed wore face masks and about half did not wear gloves. They
 11 suggest that people likely to handle laboratory animals should be screened before
 12 being employed and be told what precautions to take.

TEXT0 N° 2

READER'S DIGEST, APRIL 1998



Bibliografia consultada:

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APPENDIX 3 - TEXT 1

ANIMAL ALLERGY

NEW SCIENTIST, 4 NOVEMBER 1995

People who handle laboratory animals at work need plenty of tissues and lots of eyedrops. An Australian study of 228 researchers, teachers, students and animal house workers from Sydney found that more than half are allergic to the animals. "This is a surprisingly high number", says Margaret Stuart from the School of Biological Science at Macquarie University in Sydney.

The study, reported in the latest issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*, reveals that of those exposed to laboratory animals for three month or more, 56 per cent experience irritation of the skin, eyes or nose. Almost a quarter suffer from asthma.

Stuart and her team say that people should wear protective clothing - only 44 per cent of those surveyed wore face masks and about half did not wear gloves. They suggest that people likely to handle laboratory animals should be screened before being employed and be told what precautions to take.

APPENDIX 4 - TEXT 2

Would you rather have whole chips...or air?



7 OZ. CAN OF ORIGINAL PRINGLES

6 OZ. BAG OF LEADING NATIONAL POTATO CHIPS

© 1997 P&G



When you open a bag of chips, you get a lot of air.
But, when you open Original Pringles, you get more whole chips.
With Pringles, there's more to eat, so there's more to love.
Once you pop...you can't stop!®

APPENDIX 5 - INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS

1. In order to answer the first question, see the text on the overhead projector.
2. No text will be provided in order to answer the second question.
3. You can use the dictionary in order to answer the questions about Text 1.
4. You **cannot** use the dictionary to answer the questions about Text 2.
5. Write your name on all the pages of the test.
6. Answer all the questions and items.
7. This test will not give you a grade to pass the year although it is very important to **answer all the questions seriously.**

THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOOD LUCK!